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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 002387

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [YM](#) [KBIO](#) [DOMESTIC](#) [POLITICS](#)

SUBJECT: PM BA JAMMAL (VAINLY) AFFIRMS HIS ROLE TO
AMBASSADOR

REF: SANAA 1537

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas C. Krajieski; reasons 1.4 (b and d.)

1. (C) Summary: In a 9/6 introductory call on Prime Minister Ba Jammal, Ambassador was treated to a wide-ranging and somewhat rambling review of Yemen's development obstacles and affirmed the ROYG's support for G8 reform initiatives. Ba Jammal is widely rumored to be on his way out, but held court with the Ambassador and blatantly tried to show he was still in control. End summary.

PM Endorses BMENA; Seeks Help with Boarder Security

2. (C) Ba Jammal expressed support for the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA) and explained that he will gather Foreign Minister Qirbi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Salami and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Sofan 9/7 to discuss Yemen's participation at upcoming G8 BMENA meetings. Characterizing himself as pragmatic, Ba Jammal expressed a willingness to work with the U.S. and held forth with Ambassador and accompanying Emboffs on Yemen's history. Blaming Yemen's development challenges on late oil discovery -- some fifty years after the KSA, Ba Jammal also stated that Yemen's 150 year separation compounded Yemen's difficulties. Ba Jammal highlighted Yemen's long coast-line and newly demarcated borders as areas where security assistance is needed.

3. (C) Attributing Yemen's stable financial situation to his own policies, Ba Jammal underscored Yemen's poverty, noting an annual 4 billion USD budget for a population of 20 million, compared to oil-wealthy Gulf countries who have significantly smaller populations to support. (Comment: Deputy Prime Minister Salami is the architect of Yemen's monetary policy. Ba Jammal reportedly interferes with and tries to derail Salami's fiscal initiatives. End Comment). Ba Jammal further identified himself as Yemen's lead drafter for the third poverty reduction strategy. (Note: Ministry of Planning is believed to have lead on this project). In closing, Ba Jammal, affirming that he was a Dewey pragmatist, reiterated his commitment to work with the U.S. in practical ways and expressed hope for closer cooperation between the two nations.

Bio Note: Prison, Former Oil Minister and Heart Surgery

4. (C) Bio note: Explaining he recently returned from his annual check up, Ba Jammal openly discussed a single heart bypass surgery he underwent last summer in England. Ba Jammal added that he suffered nerve damage from transporting heavy cement blocks while serving in prison with a hard labor sentence in the South during 1986-1990. As a result, he has lost 20-30 percent of feeling in his hands, is undergoing physiotherapy and may have to undergo surgery.

Ba Jammal's Last Gasp?

5. (C) Comment: Prime Minister Ba Jammal presented a strong but friendly face to Ambassador. His claims of credit for policies that are his rivals' (i.e. fiscal stability and poverty reduction) indicate that Ba Jammal was anxious to appear in command. Appearances aside, however, the Ambassador's first meeting with the Prime Minister could be the last. Sanaa is rife with rumors that Ba Jammal will be sacked in the coming weeks for his involvement in the oil scandal (reftel). A major cabinet reshuffling, which had been delayed, may be back on, perhaps to deflect attention from the ongoing ROYG involvement with al-Houthi. If true, Ba Jammal may be the first to go, but a well-qualified former Southern Yemeni will have to be picked to take his place thus maintaining the Cabinet's careful balance between North and South. End comment.
KRAJESKI